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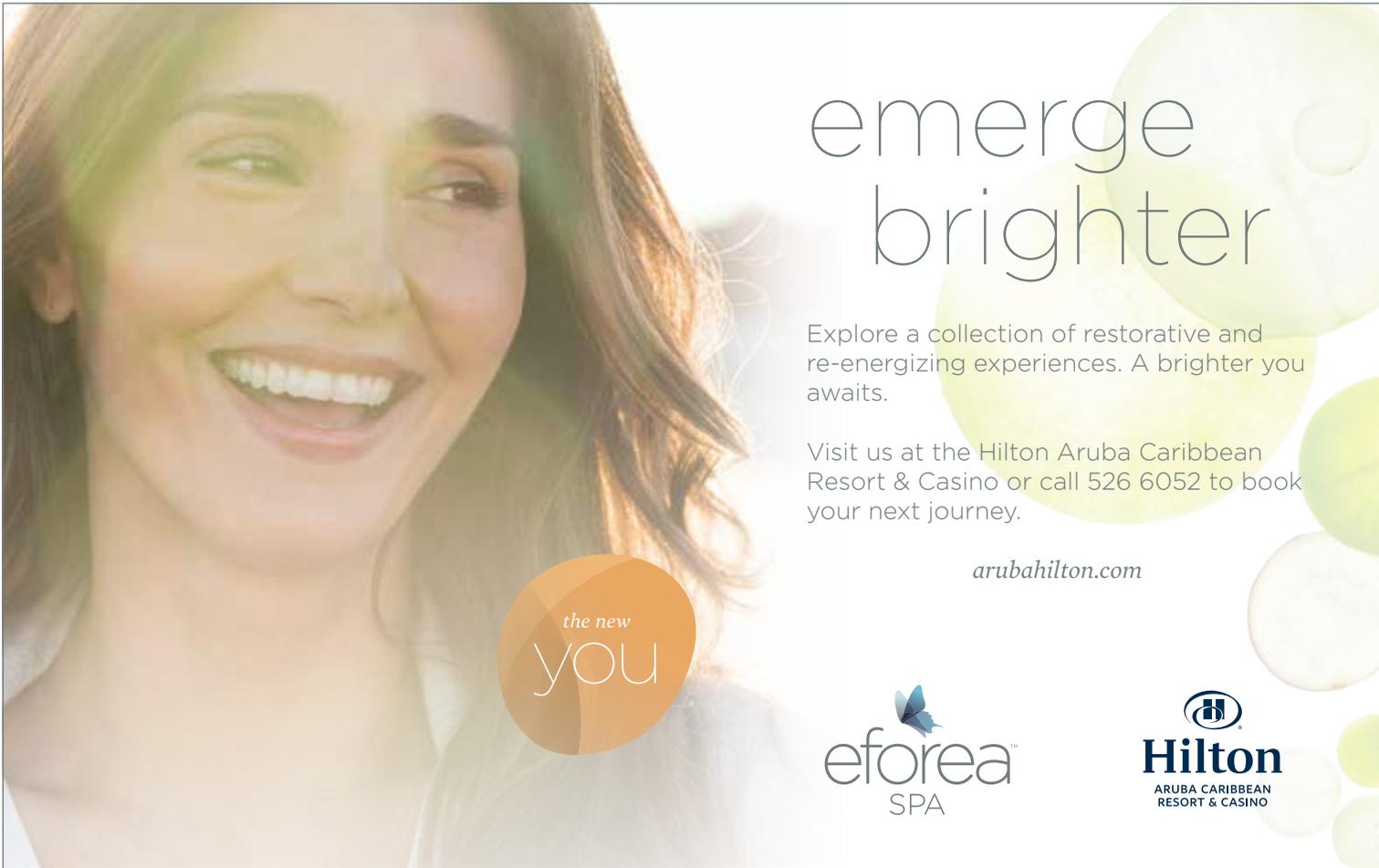
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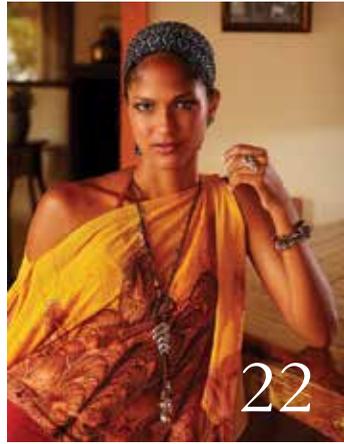
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Island Temptations to Launch When in Aruba Website

In late 2017, the award-winning creative team of *Island Temptations* will launch a new island-lifestyle website, *When in Aruba*. The website will be a content-rich exploration of Aruba, offering readers a very local, organic perspective of the most distinctive island in the Caribbean. Our lusciously rich melting pot of more than 90 nationalities offers unending narratives to share with both our local community and readers around the world. Local writers, photographers, and videographers will be creating content on a weekly basis, sharing Aruba's events and concerts as they unfold, as well as featuring the stories of talented artists, musicians, athletes, culinary personalities, and the island's warm, friendly hospitality, all told through an authentic voice.

The Island Temptations Team

Our Front COVER

Rachel Brathen is pictured in her backyard countryside garden. Clothing and accessories from T.H. Palm & Company. Hair and makeup by Bruce Stamper. Photography by Steve Keith.



ISLAND TEMPTATIONS E-mail: info@island-temptations.com
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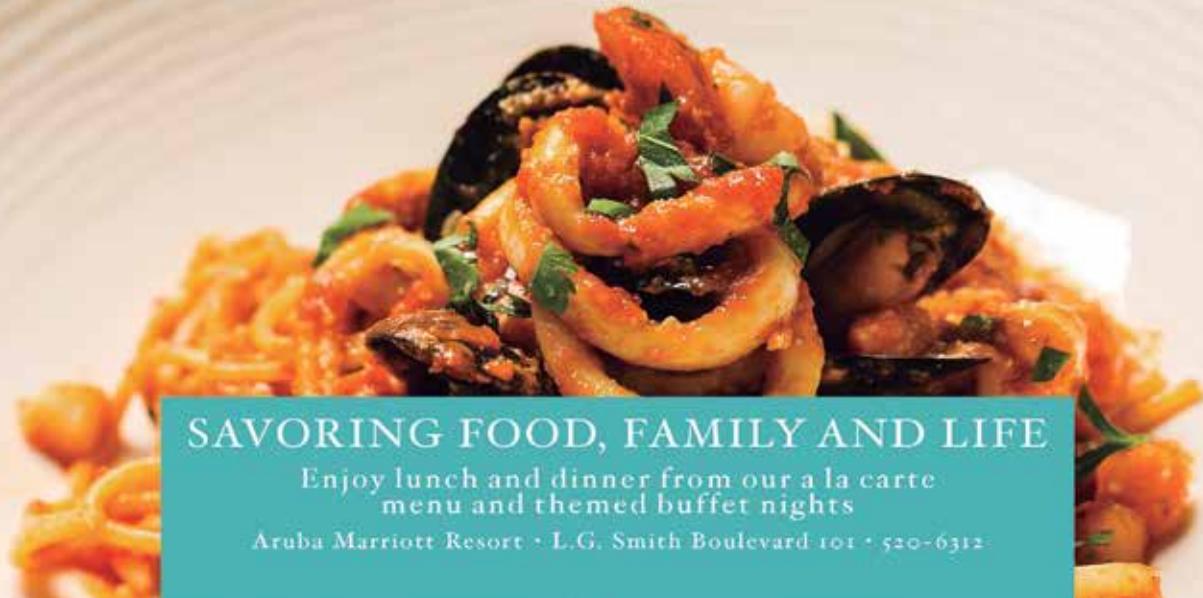
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Text and Art Direction by Tina Causey-Bislick
Photography by Steve Keith

*W*e fell in love with the recently renovated Flor de Oriente, a 1930s relic that is one of the island's oldest bars. With great attention to detail, new life was recently breathed into this historic watering hole, located on a side street in downtown Oranjestad. The end result is a charming preservation of tradition presented with a retro vibe. There were so many enchanting nooks and crannies with fascinating antiques and memories of a bygone era to explore here that we could not resist using it as a canvas for our swimsuits. The location was also the perfect setting to show off the funky and fun Caribbean head wraps of Rita Blues Wraps, paired with the latest swimsuit collections from De Palm's Coconuts and The Juggling Fish Swimwear. Our looks were accessorized by stunning collections from Rage Silver. Hair and makeup by Bruce Stamper.

** See our Buyer's Guide on page 40 for more information. ¶*

A woman with dark curly hair is the central figure, wearing a vibrant yellow headwrap tied in a knot. She is dressed in a two-piece bikini with a colorful geometric pattern in shades of turquoise, red, and black. Her accessories include large, chunky blue floral necklaces, matching blue earrings, and several rings and bracelets on her hands. She is sitting on a rustic wooden bench, leaning forward with her right hand resting on the bench. The background is a tropical-themed interior with wooden pillars, green walls, and hanging plants.

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Head wrap by Rita Blues Wraps
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*Swimsuit and cover-up available
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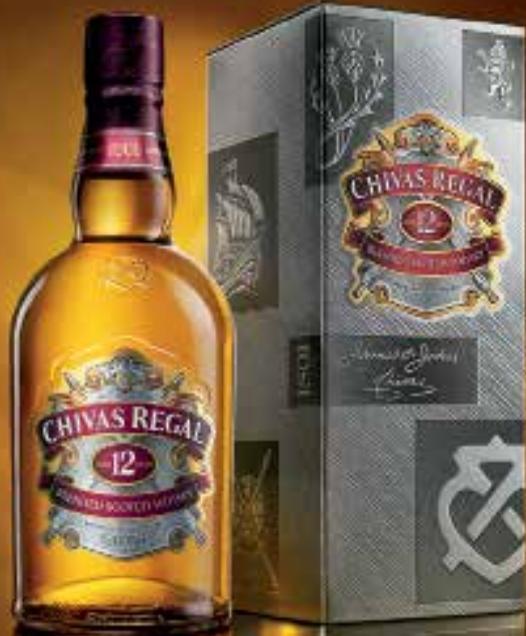


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Keepin' It Real with Yoga Girl

Text by Tina Causey-Bislick
Photography by Steve Keith and Jacky Lopez
Hair and makeup by Bruce Stamper
Dress and accessories available at
T.H. Palm & Company



She has upwards of two million followers on Instagram, is a *New York Times* best-selling author, and recently made *Forbes'* list of the most important social media influencers in the fitness arena. Most know her as Yoga Girl; I know her as Rachel. And although I have known her since she first came to Aruba some seven years ago, it was not until last year that I fully grasped her reach as a worldwide social media influencer and Instagram darling. On a visit back home in North Carolina last year, my teenage niece gushingly asked, “Do you know Yoga Girl?” I replied that indeed I know Rachel—and judging from my niece’s response, I think I scored some major auntie brownie points and a status elevation with that revelation. It was a revelation for me, as well. Of course I knew that Rachel’s popularity on the international yoga scene was growing and something to be admired, but the true scope of her reach and influence—including connecting with a teenager from North Carolina via Instagram—really opened my eyes to how impactful she had become, and not just because of her yoga poses.

This woman gets real—very real—on social media. I assumed that it was insightful timing (she entered the Instagram scene pretty early in the game and wisely recognized its potential reach and power) combined with images of a beautiful, bikini-clad blonde doing impressive yoga poses on an island paradise that brought her social media fame. But between applications of mascara and lipstick by our makeup artist for our cover shoot, Rachel tells me that it wasn’t until she started including posts about her real-life struggles that social media responded in a big way, fueling a connectivity that catapulted her to superstar social media status.

From perfecting idyllic poses in paradise, Rachel’s social media persona has evolved to sharing life’s highs, lows, and just about everything in between. No longer a 20-something gal traveling to exotic places



Shooting our cover at Rachel's home, we are surrounded by the day-to-day realness that she wholeheartedly embraces and unabashedly shares with her social media followers. Sitting at her kitchen table, she multitasks between working her social media platforms, communicating with a friend back home in Sweden, and pondering over wardrobe options that her right hand, close friend, and general manager, Amelie, and I present to her, while I pepper her with questions for my article... all this in the midst of a hair and makeup session, a consistent flow of doggies coming and going (yes, Instagrammers, I met Ringo), and daddy Dennis feeding baby Lea Luna some oatmeal and bananas next to her, as our production crew is in and out, setting up for our shoot.

like Costa Rica and Thailand, Rachel is now a mom with a new set of priorities, and although she has had her share of haters and naysayers on social media and has lost followers along the way—especially when she has delved into the heat of politics—the majority of her followers are loving joining her on this real-life journey, connecting to her stories of family life and raising baby Lea Luna, crying along with her during the heartbreaking and rewarding moments that come with heading an animal rescue organization (Sgt. Pepper's Friends), following the trials and tribulations of opening and operating a new business (Island Yoga—lots more about that on the following pages), and relating to the everyday challenges that we all have to navigate.

Life is not perfect—it's messy—and Rachel is not afraid to share it all. “We have a tendency to only share the good stuff or create an image of a perfect life—it's just not healthy,” says Rachel, who is rightly concerned about the negative influence this can have, especially on young girls and women. In this Instagram post, Rachel opens up in her brutally honest way about her fears and motherhood:

yoga_girl: This could be an ad for Baby Björn. It's not. Every time I post about this carrier I get shit because it's not “ergonomic enough”. Whatever the hell that means. It's easy as hell to strap yourself into and that's why I wear it. Doing everything perfectly as a mom is fucking EXHAUSTING! I'm constantly worrying about everything I'm doing wrong. On nights when she's up or when her naps are short I wonder; is she getting enough sleep? When she sleeps through the night and takes two-hour naps I wonder; is she sleeping too much? I worry about if she is too hot or too cold - we sleep in air conditioning and I agonize over whether the perfect temperature is 24 or 25 degrees Celsius/75.2 or 77F (with 24 I worry that she gets cold after a while? But at 25 I think maybe she should wear a pj without socks?). I worry about her eating - now that she is eating solids, should she still breastfeed as much? She loves oatmeal and cereal and only wants my boob a few times a day now. Is this normal? Is she eating too much? Too little? And her playtime - I worry we should be spending more time outside but when we're outside I feel like she is getting too much sun. And of course this is not even getting into all the ways I worry she might get injured or die, something that's at the front of my mind in absolutely everything I do. GODDAMMIT THE EXTENT OF MY WORRY IS ENDLESS. And not at all proportionate to what she actually needs. I know I'm doing a good job. A great job. She is so loved. She has everything she needs. Hell, she might be the luckiest baby of all time. She has a full time mom and a full time dad and a full time grandma and aunts and uncles that adore her and a whole tribe of people loving her so much. She is safe. Held. Everything is ok. And yes, somewhere along the way I'm going to fuck up. And that's going to be ok, too.

I'm writing this sitting on the floor at the top of the staircase outside our bedroom, drinking a beer while listening to her fall asleep in her crib because our monitor is out of battery. All is well. This beer tastes so damn good. And right now, after writing this, I feel like a damn good mom.

Thank you, vulnerability. You save me every time.

Did I mention Rachel can be brutally honest? By the way, this post garnered over 65,000 likes in less than a day!

Although bringing the joyous Lea Luna into the world and raising her with husband Dennis is by far Rachel's proudest achievement, the past year has also marked another major milestone—the opening of Island Yoga. Read on to learn about the Caribbean's largest yoga studio, located on Aruba.

Get Your Yoga On at Island Yoga!

Rachel Brathen, aka Yoga Girl, ushered in 2017 with the opening of Island Yoga, the Caribbean's largest yoga center. The 18,000-square-foot center of wellness and yoga features two dedicated yoga practice spaces (with a third practice space opening this fall), showers, dressing rooms and restrooms, a clothing and accessories boutique, Nourish Café, and a peaceful outdoor garden for relaxation.

At the heart of Island Yoga are the yoga and wellness-centered classes, seminars, and retreats. It's easy to do #YogaEveryDamnDay at Island Yoga, where more than two dozen weekly opportunities to stretch and strengthen both body and mind await. Classic Vinyasa Flow, Yin Yoga, Core Flow, Power Hour, Ritual Flow, Terrawave Yoga (a unique flow class on bamboo balance boards), and Satsang meditation practices are offered in the morning, afternoon, and evening throughout the week, hosted by local and international yoga instructors. Rachel's





The Luna Shala practice room.

SPECIAL FEATURE

signature SUP Yoga (Standup Paddleboard Yoga), practiced on handcrafted boards created just for Island Yoga, is held on the serene waters just off Fisherman's Huts, next to The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba. If you are on the island during a full moon, a most unique island experience is Island Yoga's Full Moon Flow, held under the light of the moon on the powder-soft sands of Arashi Beach, just underneath the hillside perch of our historic California Lighthouse.



Island Yoga's boutique features yoga gear and unique island apparel and accessories, including Tangerine Aruba's handcrafted bags and totes (crafted right in the boutique) and We The Beach People accessories.

Fuel your body at Island Yoga's Nourish Café. I swear, if I could eat here every day, I could easily become a vegan—or at the very least a vegetarian. Nutrient-rich, savory dishes are bursting with taste, flavored with the delicate





There is a different chia pudding every day. Pictured here is chia pudding with coconut, mango, and fresh berries.

Nourish has a different lunch special each day from noon to 2:30 pm. Pictured here is the couscous bowl.



finesse of fresh herbs and spices. Quench your thirst and amp up your energy tank with fresh juices, smoothies, and organic teas and coffees.

Whether stopping in for a class or a nosh at Nourish Café, visitors to the island can infuse a bit of island wellness into their vacations while enjoying Island Yoga Aruba's serene and inspirational setting. And for our local community, Island Yoga has special packages to help you make yoga and wellness a regular part of your health and fitness regime. [T](#)

For more information, visit the website at islandyoga.com.



Nourish's taco salad features cilantro brown rice, avocado, corn, black beans, tortilla chips, and fresh salsa over crunchy romaine lettuce.



The "All-Day Breakfast Burrito" is heartily stuffed with brown rice, mushrooms, avocado, tofu scramble, and chipotle sauce, and served with a fresh pico de gallo.



Pesto meets goat cheese in this toasty panini.



Avocado toast made with fresh artisan bread and topped with grilled mushrooms.



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"Nothing is more rewarding than seeing children, teens, adults, and seniors all come together in one place with one common interest: changing their lives and becoming fit and healthy." – Leroy de Vries



Finding My Fitness Lane in CrossFit

Text by Tina Causey-Bislick
Photography by Steve Keith

It was the dreaded bastion of my fitness journey—that seemingly insurmountable genre of exercise that I avoided wholeheartedly. Through much of my life, exercise was centric to who I was. I learned discipline and commitment through the rigors of competitive swimming for most of my youth, with my mother filling in any scheduling gaps for me and my sisters with years of dance lessons, a couple of seasons of ice skating, and running on the track team in junior high and high school. As an adult, I bopped my way through the aerobic dance craze, step classes, Spinning, Pilates, multiple styles of yoga, weight training with a trainer, TRX, Body Pump, mountain biking, beach tennis, and Zumba, and I even strapped on some high heels and gave pole dancing/fitness a spin. Throw in some workout videos (remember *Buns of Steel* or *The Firm* workouts?!), and I think I managed to try just about every fitness craze out there. All but one. CrossFit.

Recently, I succumbed to the rigors of an insane schedule and allowed myself a two-year semi-hiatus from fitness, and it showed. I dug a hole for myself that would require some major shoveling to get out of. I needed a jump-start. Could CrossFit be it? I heard the horror stories: “It’s so intense that you will want to puke every time.” I had just turned 51: Would I be in over my head? Should I just accept that at my age I will never be any version of my former fit self?

Some of my friends from beach tennis became absorbed in the CrossFit culture that has really taken off on the island over the past few years. Their fitness levels, physiques, and even their beach tennis games took huge leaps. My friend Yvette—she is one of my fitness “role models” who, like me, has dabbled in quite a variety of exercise and sports—has completely immersed herself in the CrossFit lifestyle for

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more than three years, and though she has always looked great, she now looks fricking amazing and is one of the top female CrossFitters on the island. Like many, she was apprehensive, but her brother-in-law encouraged her to try something new and was convinced she would love it. “I was scared,” Yvette tells me, “but after my first WOD (workout of the day), I was hooked!” Not a fan of the traditional gym scene, she was never motivated to see her various well-intentioned gym memberships through. But once she joined CrossFit A297, the island’s first official CrossFit affiliate, she kept going back daily for more. “No sport ever had that effect on me before. It’s just so nice to feel strong,” Yvette says.

CrossFit A297 is owned by Leroy and Crystal de Vries. Crystal is a native of Atlanta, GA, and although Leroy was born in Atlanta (his parents are from Aruba), he spent a well-traveled childhood living in Holland, Trinidad, the UAE, and Aruba, as well as Atlanta. The couple met in 2004, but didn’t catch the CrossFit buzz until a few years later. “Leroy has always been more physically active than me—he started CrossFit a year before I started, after we had our first child, Sophia,” explains Crystal. Leroy progressed to coaching CrossFit, and upon Crystal’s encouragement, the family moved to Aruba and opened the island’s first *box* (the CrossFit term for gym) on October 1, 2013. Within six months, membership blossomed to upwards of 150 members and has remained steady since. Crystal credits their success with an emphasis on coaching and attention to their athletes. “We have a very large box, so that makes people feel more comfortable, having plenty of space to move around,” shares Crystal.

This past March, I decided it was time for me to join CrossFit A297. This would be the big kick in the ass I needed. Besides, I thought, *I deserve to be punished for letting my fitness lapse for two years!*

I won’t lie—the first few workouts were a little daunting. No, I was not puking, and no, the team of coaches has never made me feel like I needed to lift crazy-heavy weights or push myself to the point of pain. But it’s a tough workout, and a lot of the movements were new to me. “Every workout can be scaled to fit each individual athlete in the gym. There are progressions to each movement that help the athlete strengthen their ability to soon be able to







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“I kept coming back daily for more. No sport ever had that effect on me before. It’s just so nice to feel strong.”
 –Yvette Tromp

do the actual prescribed movements,” informs Leroy. “The coaches help the athlete decide what weight will work best for them for the duration of the workout so that form and intensity are not compromised,” he adds. Each WOD includes two options—one that is more barbell-oriented, and another that is more focused on using hand weights, kettlebells, medicine balls, and body weight. Both workouts are done at a speed to keep your heart rate up for cardio benefits. Leroy affirms, “You leave feeling like you have utilized your whole hour and are exhausted.”

I cannot honestly claim that, like Yvette, I was “hooked” after the first workout—perhaps intrigued enough to see out a month of workouts. And I am glad I did. Within a few workouts, I was feeling stronger, sleeping better, and just in general starting to feel like my younger self again. The group environment is a big motivator for me. Having people from all walks of life of varying ages, body types, and fitness levels creates a nurturing, no-judgment cocoon of positive energy that feeds my motivation. Leroy explains that “being in a class atmosphere helps you realize that everyone is struggling and you are not the only one; you build friendships within your class and push each other.”

I am now eight months in and still at it, still





FITNESS

improving, still seeing results, and committed to continuing this journey. I have settled in to three days a week at the box to build my fitness foundation, adding in swimming and other activities to round out my weekly fitness routine. Although I do not see myself diving into a full-on six-days-a-week regimen and competing in the sport, I also never thought I would last through one workout. Let's see what the next eight months bring! [T](#)

Visitors to the island are welcome to join the locals for the WOD. For more information, visit the website at www.crossfit297.com.

Leroy and Crystal de Vries, pictured here with fellow coaches Jean-Pierre van der Iak, Christopher Sarmiento, and Kenrick Tromp.

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WELLNESS

Yoga & Meditation Off the Beaten Path

Text by Debbie Kunder
Photography by Steve Keith



When it comes to achieving wellness of mind, body, and spirit, yoga and meditation score big. Fortunately, Aruba is brimming with a wide variety of yoga and meditation classes, offering both locals and tourists alike healthy ways to nurture themselves. You'll find the requisite Hatha Yoga, Power Yoga, Vinyasa Yoga, and seated meditation classes if you're looking for those. But if you want something a bit different, I invite you to join me in trying out the following experiences that are a bit more off the beaten path.

AntiGravity Aerial Yoga with Maria Pucci

American Christopher Harrison—a former gymnast, dancer, and Broadway choreographer, as well as the cofounder of Cirque du Soleil—is the founder of AntiGravity Aerial Yoga and several other AntiGravity disciplines. His Aerial Yoga is a unique combination of yoga, dance, Pilates, and calisthenics, practiced with the aid of a special hammock suspended from the ceiling. Christopher teaches Aerial Yoga at the AntiGravity Lab in NYC, which is precisely where local yoga instructor Maria Pucci became certified before bringing it to Aruba.



The Class

I had the pleasure of receiving a class from Maria at FLY Fit Studio, located at Paseo Herencia in Palm Beach. I've done plenty of yoga in my life—even dabbled a bit in teaching at one point—so I figured Aerial Yoga would be a piece of cake. Plus, I had somehow envisioned that the practice would entail little more than stretching languorously in the suspended hammock. Boy, was I wrong!

One of the first exercises Maria demonstrated involved simply sitting in the hammock with all the fabric bunched together just below the bum. For me? A little painful. I figured something had to be wrong. Maybe the hammock was at the wrong height? “Nope, it's perfect,” assured Maria. “Actually, the pain is quite normal.” She pointed out that since the hammock is not at all stretchy and has no give, when you put your weight on it, you're getting a therapeutic deep-tissue massage. “It's a great way to release toxins from your body tissues,” she added. Trusting in this unexpected benefit, I pushed through the discomfort.

We moved on from there to some core-strengthening exercises, which were reflective of the Pilates influence. There was also a fair amount of reaching up and pulling on the hammock to lift ourselves, providing a nice upper-body workout.

Then it was time to turn upside down. With faith in Maria (and much less elegantly than Maria), I made my way into Spiderman Pose—legs wrapped around the hammock, bottoms of the feet pressed together, head and arms dangling towards the floor. Ahhhhh. “You're now experiencing one of the greatest benefits of Aerial Yoga—the decompression of the spine,” informed Maria. It all made sense—inverting yourself and allowing gravity to naturally align the body. It felt good...real good.

All yoga practitioners know Downward Dog. In Aerial Yoga, it's Flying Dog (of course). Think Downward Dog but with the hammock lifting your pelvis up and back, like when a yoga instructor corrects your Downward Dog by standing behind you and manually pulling your pelvis up and back. Maria also demoed Superman Pose by stretching out completely inside the hammock with arms extended forward. Getting into this pose requires trust in the instructor and trust in the hammock, providing a valuable lesson in learning to let go.

The class ended with about five minutes of



Savasana wrapped in the hammock, otherwise known as “cocooning.” Now *this* was a pose I could certainly get behind. Eyes closed, arms crossed over my chest, rocking ever so gently back and forth, back and forth. Absolute bliss.

The Benefits

Aerial Yoga provides a total-body workout, relieves stress, improves strength and flexibility, helps with back problems, improves balance, stimulates the release of “happy” hormones, improves the circulatory and lymphatic systems, helps to open up the joints, and teaches body awareness. And let's not forget that it's simply a lot of fun to fly and dance in the air!

Who Can Do It

Everyone! Maria has a 70-year-old in one of her classes, as well as an amputee. Kids especially love Aerial Yoga, where they are given the freedom to explore new poses, thereby building confidence. Maria even has a class exclusively for men, who find the poses particularly helpful in increasing flexibility.

For class schedule, visit [Cacao Yoga on Facebook](#).



Chair Yoga with Gladys Duarte

When Gladys Duarte started giving yoga classes at the island's hotels two years ago, she would bring her mats for the students to roll out and use. She quickly noticed, however, that many people couldn't comfortably sit on the mat on the floor, instead hunching their backs, their postures complete messes. Or perhaps an injury was making it difficult to even get on the mat at all. That's when Gladys started looking for a better alternative for these students. That's when she found Chair Yoga.

Chair Yoga is exactly what you would expect it to be—yoga done while sitting in a chair. The chair can also be used as a support for standing poses. So you can imagine it's a very gentle yoga practice and therefore welcoming towards all levels of fitness.

The Class

I went to Gladys' Friday morning class at Casa Del Mar on Eagle Beach to get my very first dose

of Chair Yoga. The chairs were already lined up just outside the gym by the pool, affording a glimpse of the sea. A few people were already sitting in the chairs, patiently waiting for class to begin. I grabbed a seat and joined them. Little by little, others trickled in until all the seats were filled. In fact, more seats had to be set up to accommodate everyone. Needless to say, this class is popular!

Gladys started with a few simple movements to get us warmed up. We then moved on to some chest-opening exercises, arm stretches, and gentle twists, all the while sitting up nice and straight at the edge of our chairs. And that's precisely the beauty of doing yoga in a chair: the chair perfectly supports the lower half of the body, making it much easier to keep the back erect and tall, which is exactly what you need to properly carry out many yoga exercises.

Ironically, when we got up out of our chairs for the first time, it was to do none other than Chair Pose. I had to chuckle quietly to myself as we pretended to be sitting in our imaginary

chairs. We then ended the class with a few standing poses to work on balance, using the chair for support, just as a ballerina uses a bar to practice her pirouette. (Gladys is a trained ballerina, after all.) She's also Cuban, and she brings her sassy, Latin energy to the class, which everybody seems to love.

Gladys explains why the class is so popular: "My students love that they can come stretch, let go, move without risk of injury, breathe, and take the time to know their bodies." She continues, "And I love the class because it's like therapy—I can help people. I see people come to their first class all hunched over and tired, but after two weeks of coming, their postures are so much better, and they have so much more energy. I love that! Plus, it's not about who can do the longest handstand or the most complicated pose like you find in some types of yoga. It's simply about reteaching people how to sit, and there's certainly no ego there!"

The Benefits

Chair Yoga improves posture, flexibility, balance, mental clarity, and coordination of mind and body. It also relieves stress, strengthens the core, and aids in pain management.

Who Can Do It

It's certainly ideal for seniors, people with disabilities, and people who are very inflexible, but really, it's for everyone.

To join a class, contact Gladys on Facebook by visiting @FunctionalMovementbyGladys.



Mindfulness Walk at the Butterfly Farm Aruba with Shanti

The Butterfly Farm Aruba is perhaps one of the most peaceful places on the island. Shanti, a local yoga and meditation teacher who has worked on and off at the farm for 18 years, thinks so too. That's one of the reasons she chose it as the location for teaching mindful walking (or walking meditation). Shanti explains, "In the Buddhist tradition, walking meditation can be done literally anywhere. Here in the garden, we're a bit pampered—it's like walking in paradise—but it certainly adds to the experience of becoming calm and serene." It's more than just that, though. For Shanti, there's a clear connection between butterflies and meditation: transformation. "Just as the process of metamorphosis transforms a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, meditation transforms the mind so it can be more colorful, lighter, and freer, like a butterfly."

The Class

About six of us gathered in the far corner of the tropical garden on a raised wooden deck. Surrounded by the lush greenery and flitting butterflies, we began the session with a seated meditation, focusing on our inhalations and exhalations. Shanti then explained, "With meditation, you focus on one thing. Maybe it's the breath, a candle, a sound, or a mantra. Today, we'll be focusing on the sensation of walking with the help of a mantra."

Shanti demonstrated how each step should be taken—heel, sole, ball...heel, sole, ball—according to the mantra "one, two, three...one, two, three." "You'll take ten steps like this, stop, slowly make a full turn, then continue back in the opposite direction. Then keep repeating." And for those times we become distracted by our relentless thoughts? "Don't force anything. Just take notice of the thoughts that come up without judgment, then gently bring your awareness back to the walking, which is the entry point back into the present."

We all spread out in the garden to begin our mindful walking. At this early in the morning, we pretty much had the place to ourselves. And so I began. Heel, sole, ball. Heel, sole, ball. *One, two, three. One, two, three.* I focused on my bare feet in the sand. Heel, sole, ball. *One, two, three.* Heel, sole, ball. *One, two, three.* *Did my stomach just gurgle? Should've eaten more for breakfast. A coffee would be nice*





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right now. I wonder if they sell coffee here? Probably. Whoooooops! Reining my mind back in, I returned to my one-two-threes, that is, until my mind wandered off again. Remembering Shanti's words, I simply acknowledged the thoughts and redirected my focus back to the walking.

A bell beckoned us back to the wooden deck, where we regrouped for the close of the class, sharing our walking experiences with one another. I realized I wasn't the only one prone to distractions. In a later conversation with Shanti, she shed a bit more light on the issues of distraction and focus. "Focusing on the walking is not actually the most important thing. What's most important is *bringing the focus back to the walking* after losing focus. *This* is where the real work lies. The coming back. This is the part that leads to actual changes in the brain. Neurons begin to make new connections, breaking negative thought patterns. This metamorphosis has a name. It's called neuroplasticity. But it's not going to happen in just one session. It's an investment. It takes at least two months of daily practice for new brain structures to form and for negative behaviors to change. Only then will you start to notice the effects of the practice."

The Benefits

In Shanti's own words, meditation "cleanses the nervous system," leading to an endless list of benefits. It clears and settles the mind (reduces stress); slows the aging process; improves sleep, digestion, metabolism, immunity, and concentration; increases self-awareness; makes you feel more connected to others; and makes you happier. Shanti shares, "The benefits are sometimes really surprising. For example, I no longer have sugar cravings, and my skin has cleared up. Meditation really is so incredibly powerful."

Who Can Do It

Everybody! The class is particularly ideal for those who want to practice meditation but find it difficult to sit still for a long period of time.

The Mindfulness Walk at the Butterfly Farm Aruba takes place every Wednesday morning from 7:15 am to 8 am. Cost is \$12. Participants are welcome to spend about 20 extra minutes in the garden after the walk. Call the farm at 586-3656 to reserve a spot.

Mystical Yoga with Maria Pucci

Perhaps Ganapati, the director of School Yoga Institute in Costa Rica, said it best: "Mystical Yoga is the union of Sadhana Yoga and indigenous shamanic practices, revealing your inner mystic." But it was Maria Pucci—who learned the practice in Costa Rica and brought it to Aruba—who showed me what it's all about. Having already practiced Aerial Yoga with Maria, I was looking forward to seeing what else Maria had up her yoga sleeve.

The Class

You really can't find a more beautiful spot on the island to do yoga than Tres Trapi Beach, located just a bit further south of Boca Catalina. Two other girls

and I laid out our mats on the low limestone shelf that characterizes much of the coastline here—the perfect perch from which to take in the glorious splendor of the crystal-clear water.

As Maria lit some palo santo, she explained a bit about Mystical Yoga. "The base of Mystical Yoga is a spiritual practice called Sadhana Yoga, and we'll be mixing in some Vinyasa Flow." For those new to the term (like me), Sadhana Yoga involves surrendering the ego through meditation, yoga, chanting, and prayer. Maria continued, "We'll be connecting the mind, body, and spirit through breathing-based meditation, some chanting, and some chakra work." Maria then added the smoking palo santo to her collection of sacred objects—special stones, crystals





charged with positive energy, essential oils, and a deck of angel cards—all laid out on a makeshift table in front of her.

The class started with deep, focused breathing, one nostril at a time. There's certainly something to be said about mindfully inhaling pure ocean air. We then began to move our bodies slowly, stretching and twisting to warm ourselves up, before moving into a more rigorous Vinyasa Flow practice. Think Sun Salutations, Bridge Pose, Happy Baby, Plow, Yoga Squat—all connected in a series, all performed in rhythm with the breath. So while Mystical Yoga is indeed a spiritual practice, it's also a very physical one, and you're going to work up a sweat.

Throughout the practice, Maria shared mystical stories with us—tidbits of inspiration we could use in our daily lives. Her words seemed to be in perfect rhythm with the ebb and flow of the water just beneath our perch. Maria also guided us in a chakra-balancing sequence that relied on the use of chanting to produce balancing vibrations. Whether I was achieving this balance or not, I did feel a pleasant connection of mind, body, and nature. My arms reaching to the cloudless sky, the sun caressing my skin, and the ocean breeze tousling my hair, how could I not?

The class ended with an aromatherapeutic Savasana, with Maria dabbing a bit of essential oil on our necks. We also each received an angel card, mine promising me that if I formed a focused intention for the day, I would be able to achieve my goal. Good stuff to start my day with. My only regret is that I didn't jump off the cliff, yoga pants and all, into the perfectly clear water to properly end the class. Next time.

The Benefits

I asked Maria to name the three most significant benefits of Mystical Yoga. She replied, "It strengthens the connection between mind, body, and soul; brings more awareness to your breathing; and encourages you to live in the present moment." (You can throw all the physical benefits of a Vinyasa Yoga class in there as well.)

Who Can Do It

Anyone can do this class, but it is certainly advantageous to have some familiarity with Vinyasa postures. ¶

Note: The class is not shaded, so bring your sunscreen! For class schedule, visit [Cacao Yoga on Facebook](#).

Aruba's Brick-and-Mortar Wellness Studios

Text by Debbie Kunder



Aruba is the ideal place to take yoga, meditation, and other wellness activities outdoors. It's hard to beat Downward Dog with an upside-down view of the sun setting into the Caribbean Sea. But for those who prefer the more traditional brick-and-mortar studio, complete with comfortable amenities and a diverse class schedule, Aruba is home to three full-scale yoga centers. We covered the newest kid on the block, Island Yoga Aruba, on page 44. To learn more about Prana and Happy Buddha Aruba, read on!

Prana Yoga & Meditation Center

In a quiet neighborhood on the outskirts of Oranjestad, just steps away from Betico Croes Plaza, you'll find Prana Yoga & Meditation Center. Prana became Aruba's first yoga center when it was founded in 2005 by Ellen Buermans. Since then, Shanti has taken over ownership of Prana, and in 2016, Ellen opened her alternative treatment center, Pulse Aruba, as an adjoining, complementary wing of Prana.

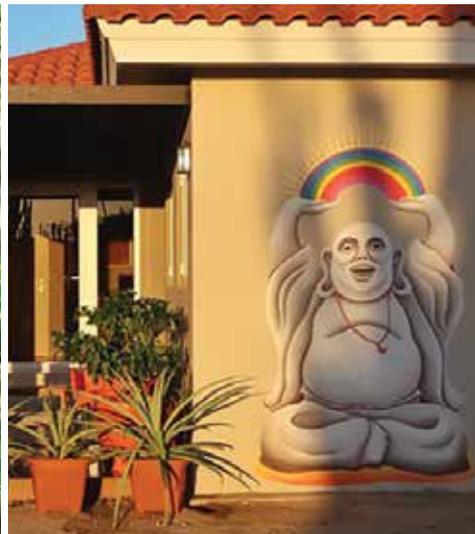
Prana was actually founded with the intention of providing rentable space where local teachers and therapists could ply their trades, and this open-door principle continues today. So while Shanti offers a staple menu of weekly yoga classes, meditation courses, and pre- and postnatal courses, there's also a nice mix of other local (and international) practitioners giving yoga classes, as well as one-on-one health counseling and various workshops. In

this way, Prana acts as a collaborative enterprise, providing the community with a wide variety of unique health and wellness services.

One of Prana's most distinctive physical features is its lush, peaceful garden, centered around a giant cactus. This charming space is perfect for outdoor classes and also serves as a beautiful under-the-stars venue for nighttime community events, including the Cadushi Festival, which gives local artisans the chance to display and sell their wares several times a year.

Prana Yoga & Meditation Center
Address: Zepp Lampestraat 10
Prana Tel: (297) 661-8133/588-2882
Website: www.pranaaruba.com
Facebook: Prana Yoga Aruba





Happy Buddha Aruba

Happy Buddha Aruba (HBA) was founded in 2013 by fitness-guru-turned-yogi Corinne Voermans. She operated out of a makeshift studio until 2015, which marked the opening of her new studio, situated on a 66,700-square-foot piece of private property in Palm Beach. The studio's main yoga shala is a truly inspired space, featuring a vaulted ceiling and wooden floors. The new studio is surrounded by a serene tropical garden that is home to melodious local birds.

HBA is the first and only yoga studio on the island to offer Hot Yoga, which enjoys an impressive following. Corinne and her team are also proud to offer a number of other yoga classes, including options for teens and kids. For those entirely new to yoga, Corinne offers a Yoga4Beginner's Course, which covers the eight limbs of yoga. HBA also hosts Power Vinyasa Yoga teacher training presented by Fred Busch.

HBA, however, goes well beyond yoga, challenging both locals and tourists to consider all aspects of wellness. A mindful eating workshop series explores plant-based eating, and a detox and health coach training program is even offered. A special personal development course (delivered exclusively in Spanish) teaches students how to reach their highest potential in all aspects of their lives. Corinne also offers counseling through her Rebalance program, relying on an integrated approach of psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral change, and meditation techniques. [TT](#)

Happy Buddha Aruba

Address: Monserat 5, Palm Beach (Conveniently located close to the high-rise hotel area.)

Tel: (297) 592-8738

Website: www.happybuddha-aruba.com

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Running Princesses

Text by Tina Causey-Bislick
Photography by Steve Keith

The soul
sisters
of sweat

There is strength in numbers when fitness becomes a group project, and this group of six local ladies demonstrates that working out together embodies many different definitions of strength. They call themselves the Running Princesses, a name derived from their passion for running and their eventual goal of running in the Disney Fairy Tale Challenge—a two-day running event that starts with the Disney Princess Enchanted 10K on day

one, followed by day two's Disney Princess Half Marathon—being held on February 24 and 25, 2018, at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

Carolina Merryweather-Raven, Nizana Solognier, Shohaira da Silva, Brigit Dijkhoff, Farah Figaroa, and Tracey Nicolaas represent a cross section of demographics—they range in age from 20-something to 40-something; some are single and some are married; they have small kids, grown

children, or no children at all; and they have careers ranging from business owner to account manager and bank executive.

The group credits Carolina with the spark that ignited their desire to work together towards the common goal of running the Disney event. “I had always wanted to run the Disney half marathon, but it usually conflicted with Carnival here. Next year, they are on different weekends, so I decided to go for it,” shared Carolina. She posted her goal to compete in the half marathon on the Facebook page of Malmok Runners (another running group on the island), as well as a call for donations, since in order to participate in the Disney event, she is required to raise \$800 for one of the charities sponsored by the event. Carolina chose the American Association for Cancer Research as the charity she will run for. “I think every one of us can relate to this terrible disease because it has touched all of us at one time or another. My mother had cancer, so this cause really speaks to me,” she explained. “I cried when I got my first donation,” Carolina added.

One by one, Carolina was joined by the other five ladies with the mutual goal of training together and running through the Magic Kingdom for a charitable cause. They have all chosen the American Association for Cancer Research, with the exception of Farah (see side bar on page 70).

The common threads of running and fitness weave a fabric that goes beyond their goal of running the Disney event. They have used their group’s Facebook page, Running Princesses Aruba, to reach out to others. “We said, ‘Let’s do more with our Facebook page to motivate others,’” said Shohaira, “because we wanted to share with other women that we all are different ages, with different fitness backgrounds, with jobs, children, and we have to tackle our busy schedules but still find time for ourselves and our health.” The group agreed on the motto “Exercise with a purpose,” inspiring others in the community with the real-life challenges of waking up every day and committing to living a healthy lifestyle by eating nutritiously (there are some great videos posted on their page on healthy meals and shakes) and making time for exercise amidst busy schedules.

The ladies all agreed that perhaps one of the most rewarding experiences achieved through their Facebook page is their newfound friendship with Winter Wever, a young Aruban girl now living in Sweden and battling cystic fibrosis. Winter’s mother, Natasha, reached out to the Running Princesses, who were more than happy to communicate with Winter as a source of encouragement for the daily two-mile run she must do to help keep her symptoms at bay.

Most of the ladies have reached their \$800 donation goal to qualify for the Disney Fairy Tale Challenge (100% of the donation goes to the charity), but donations are still encouraged, as every little bit helps the cause. To donate to one of these ladies, go to the following links:

Nizana Solognier: <https://secure.imisfriendraising.com/registant/mobile/mobilePersonalPage.aspx?registrationID=338783&Referrer=direct%2Fnone&langPref=en-CA>

Brigit Dijkhoff: <https://secure.imisfriendraising.com/registant/mobile/mobilePersonalPage.aspx?langPref=en-CA&RegistrationID=338779&Referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fm.facebook.com%2F#.WUe8Hliam-U.facebook>



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Tracey Nicolaas: <https://secure.imisfriendraising.com/registrant/mobile/mobilePersonalPage.aspx?RegistrationID=338742&Referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fm.facebook.com%2F>

Carolina Merryweather-Raven:
<https://secure.imisfriendraising.com/registrant/mobile/mobilePersonalPage.aspx?registrationID=338741&langPref=en-CA&Referrer=direct%2Fnone>

Farah Figaroa: https://www.youcaring.com/ethan-971199?utm_campaign=buttonshare&utm_medium=url&utm_source=copy&utm_content=cf_cp_01 

Running for EB

Running Princess Farah Figaroa will be running the Disney event in support of epidermolysis bullosa (EB), an incurable and rare genetic connective-tissue disorder. Farah's nephew, Brian, suffered from this horribly painful disease for the short eight years of his life. Farah and her brother joined a group of runners for the Disney event in the past. "I was never into exercising, but I bought a treadmill and committed to train so that I could run for Brian and raise money and awareness about EB. The first time running, I was dying after 30 seconds, and thought, I cannot do this, but then I thought, if Brian can bear so much pain every moment of every day, I can do this!" When Brian died, Farah gave up on running for several years. But then, incredibly, Farah learned of another child in Aruba, two-year-old Ethan, suffering from the same rare disease that her nephew had endured. She saw Shobaira's post about going to the Disney Fairy Tale Challenge and recommitted herself to running for the cause. Aruba's socialized healthcare does not cover all the expenses of this rare disease, and from experience, Farah knows the financial burden the family is shouldering. All donations for Farah's Disney run will go directly to the care of Ethan.



The Running Princesses (from left to right): Shobaira da Silva, Nizana Solognier, Carolina Merryweather-Raven, Tracey Nicolaas, Brigit Dijkhoff, and Farah Figaroa

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Cultivating Wellness at La Posada Care Farm

Text by Debbie Kunder
Photography by Steve Keith





Gino Frans, a soft-hearted man with the clearest green-blue eyes I have ever seen, patiently explains the founding of Eliezer Foundation and La Posada Care Farm on Aruba. Physically abused as a child growing up in Aruba, he turned to drugs at a young age. He was sent off to Holland to live with his grandmother in the hopes of setting him straight, but when that didn't work, he was sent back to Aruba. In fact, he was schlepped back and forth between the two countries for the next 13 years, his drug use never abating.

Gino knew he'd never become one of those addicts living in the streets. Until he became one. This was his rock bottom. He received treatment in various hospitals, but there was always a lurking sense of emptiness that he couldn't seem to fill. He even witnessed a good friend of his get sober and off the street—really turn his life around—which certainly gave Gino hope, but it still wasn't enough to inspire change in Gino. So what finally inspired him to seek recovery? A song. Gino was receiving support from the Salvation Army in Holland when he came across a song whose words resonated with him so much that he began to cry. For so many years, he had been carrying around so much anger and hurt, but when he heard those song lyrics—the gospel of God—they entered him, healing his pain and filling the void in his heart. Gino subsequently became an active Christian, his life completely changing for the better. You could say it was a miracle.

It didn't take long for Gino to realize that he wanted to help other addicts get off the streets. He started by opening his own home to addicts looking to turn their lives around in the Netherlands. At one point, the municipality showed interest in Gino's work, which led to a cooperative effort to help rehabilitate addicts on Dutch farms.

Ready to continue his work on his native island, Gino returned to Aruba and founded the Eliezer Foundation in 2009 with his wife, Monica, and Alverino Stamper. Searching for a farm where he could base his project, Gino came into contact with Fred Wappenaar, who generously offered his own farm in Paradera. And so another foundation was established—La Posada Care Farm—a detoxification and rehabilitation farm for alcohol and drug addicts. These two foundations, Eliezer and La Posada, proudly work together to support Aruba's addicts.

La Posada means “resting place,” and while the farm is indeed a sanctuary for addicts where they can recover and heal, they are expected to work on the farm. It's called work therapy. This approach teaches program participants good work ethics

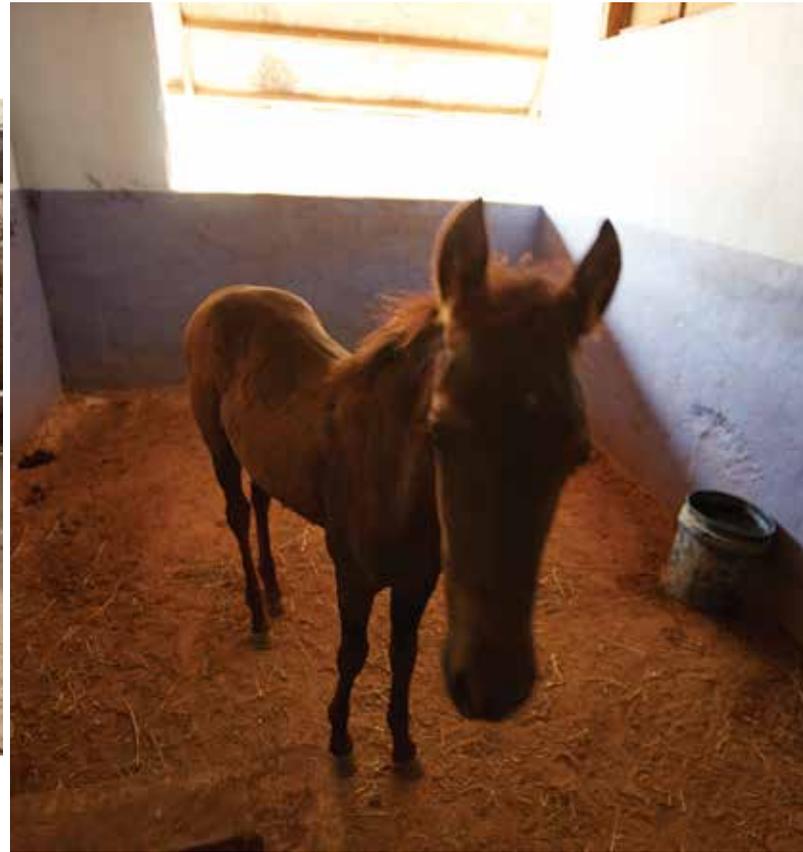
and new skills, preparing them for gainful employment for when they eventually integrate back into society.

The program can accommodate up to 20 men at a time. They reside on the premises as they complete the program. Gino points out that all program participants have to come to the farm on their own—no one is forced. “They have to want to change, otherwise it doesn’t work,” he says. “We’ve had addicts walk the entire way from downtown Oranjestad to our farm. Now *that* shows motivation.”

After an initial interview determines that an addict indeed wants to be helped, he enters a detox period of about two months. “Of course, every addict is different. For example, someone who has been an addict for 20 years will probably need more time to detox,” explains Gino. During the detox period, residents are not allowed to receive visitors. They are given a few days to acclimate to the new environment and rest a bit, after which they begin working on the farm. Following detox, residents enter the second phase, a period of about four months, wherein they continue to carry out their responsibilities on the farm, learning the work and life skills needed to become self-sufficient contributing members of society. During this second phase, residents are allowed to receive visitors and can even spend some time with their families off the farm. Vanessa Maduro, a social worker who serves as Gino’s right-hand woman, explains that some residents will stay on the farm beyond the second phase of the program while Gino helps them find a job. “Gino knows a lot of people in the community and uses these connections to find good work matches for our graduating residents,” Vanessa explains.

So what does a typical day look like for the men in residence? The residents start their day at 6 am with prayer, and then carry out their duties on the farm until noon. Gino explains, “We set everything up so that the men feel as though they are working for an actual company.” Gino is the “boss” and the more seasoned residents are the “supervisors,” teaching the newbies how to do the various jobs on the farm. The workers rotate in order to learn how to do everything, from taking care of the animals (horses, pigs, a mule, donkeys, and ducks) to cooking and cleaning. “We don’t have people coming in from outside the farm to do any work here; the men do everything themselves,” Gino points out. The men are also taught how to appropriately behave in the workplace. They are expected to follow rules of





conduct and respect one another at all times.

And then there's the therapeutic aspect. Gino explains, "We'll start off a new resident with cleaning the horse stalls. Then they progress to feeding the horses, and then to brushing and grooming them. Finally, they learn how to ride them. Of course, they're learning to start at the bottom and work their way up, just like in the actual workplace, but perhaps even more importantly, they're building self-esteem." Gino also highlights the therapeutic benefits of working with animals. "Many of our residents are what you call 'double trouble.' That means they suffer from addiction in conjunction with another mental disorder, such as autism. We see that our autistic residents especially thrive on the farm as they have such a unique connection with the animals. The animals relax and heal them, and the animals also benefit from this special connection."

In the evening, the residents meet again for

prayer. Gino shares, "Spiritual guidance plays a big role in helping the residents recover and heal, but the farm is not a church. Christianity is just the motor behind the program. The farm is accepting of all religions, races, and cultures." The evening meal is also an important part of the program. All the residents sit together—as a family—to share this meal.

Of course, one wonders about the success rate of the program. Gino explains that between 60 and 70 residents go through the farm each year, and for every 20 men, about five stay clean. But he's quick to point out that it's not really about the numbers. It's about those five men who otherwise would still be using drugs. And it's about the positive message that they will spread to other addicts who need hope in their lives—hope that they might one day change their lives around for the better as well.

Gino is excited about a new project that is already in the works at the farm—a lettuce-growing

operation. A Dutch company called Happy Ponnick will teach the recovering addicts how to grow a variety of lettuces that will be sold to local restaurants and hotels. After six months in this program, the men will have a chance to work for another year for the company under contract. Gino explains, "Think of it as one year of aftercare. The men will be working a real job and earning a wage, and meanwhile, we can monitor them. It's perfect."

The greenhouses for the project will most likely be ready by the end of this year. In the meantime, it will be business as usual at the farm, with the residents sifting and selling manure, taking care of the animals, and carrying out all the other tasks that serve as therapy. As they say in the world of recovery, one day at a time. ¹¹

For more information about Eliezer Foundation/La Posada Care Farm, visit www.eliezer-fundacion.jimdo.com.



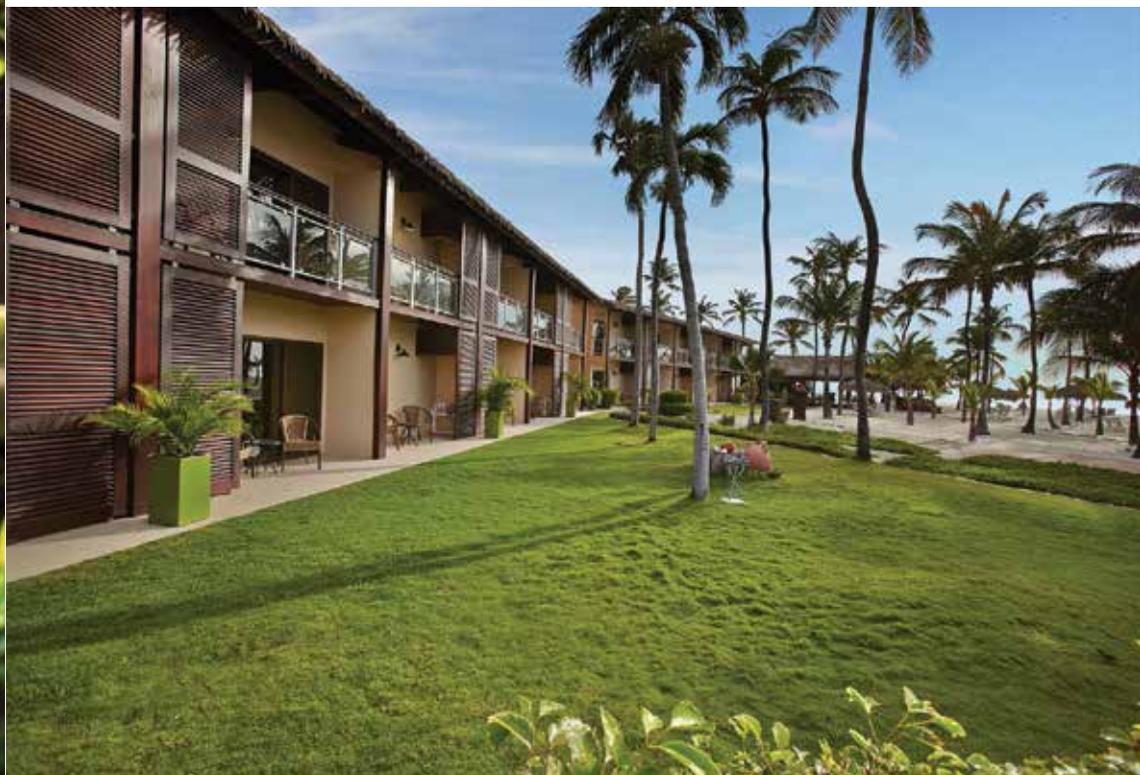
Text by Tina Causey-Bislick

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa

Where Wellness Thrives

*M*anchebo Beach Resort & Spa enjoys a prime spot on Eagle Beach, one of the world's top three beaches as named by TripAdvisor in its 2017 Travelers' Choice Awards. The tranquil beach serves as the ideal setting for this island boutique resort with a vacation lifestyle that invites guests to relax, recharge, and restore balance.

The vibe at this resort is laid-back and chill, and the staff embodies an effortless, innate island charm; but rest assured, nothing about Manchebo is by happenstance—the menu of amenities has been carefully curated, and a culture of wellness is infused into every detail of a vacation experience here.





Guest Rooms

All 72 guest rooms were recently renovated with a tasteful, contemporary island style with upscale, modern amenities. A peaceful color palette and organic textures inspired by nature encourage a restful solitude that transcends onto the private patio or balcony with views of lush tropical gardens and the Caribbean Sea.

Yoga & Pilates

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is Aruba's only resort with a daily yoga/pilates program held at the resort's two breezy, open-air yoga studios set by the sea. The resort has gained fame internationally as one of the top yoga retreat destinations, where several weeklong and four-day yoga retreats are held throughout the year.

*For those who prefer a gym-style workout, the resort's Fitness Studio has state-of-the-art cardio and strength-training equipment. Guests can also book personal training sessions.

The Spa Life

Manchebo's Spa del Sol brings the tropical luxury of a Balinese-style spa set in a Caribbean oasis. Individual thatched cabanas with teakwood furnishings overlook the sea in a fresh, open-air environment where guests can indulge in a selection of massages, skincare treatments,





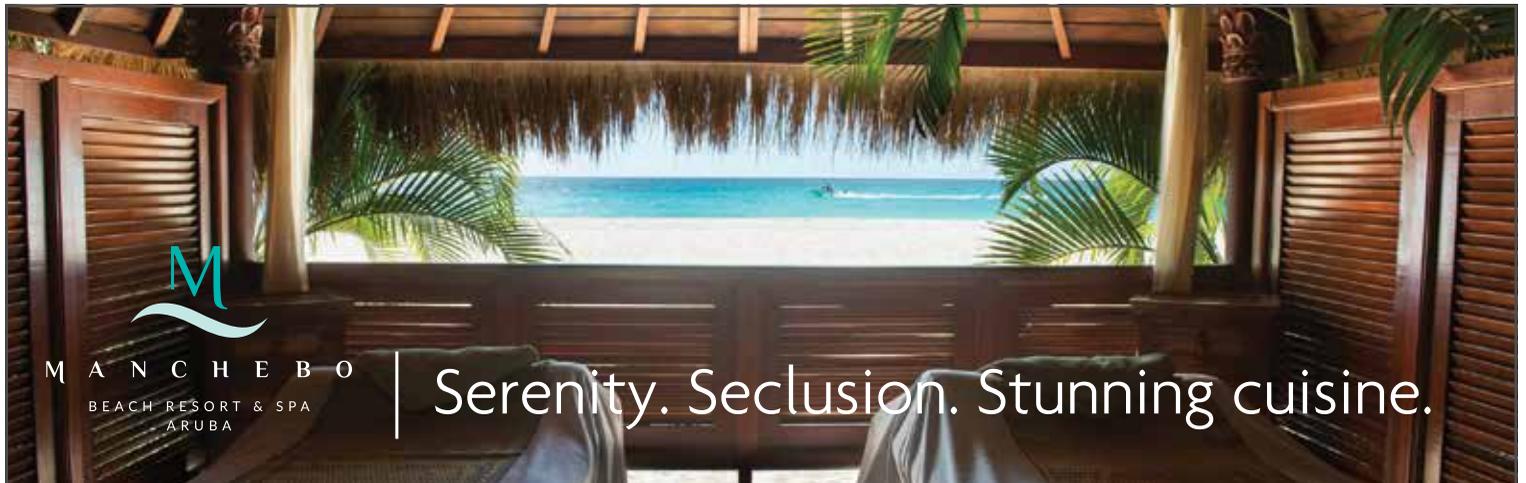
WELLNESS

manicures, and pedicures. The spa also features a steam room and a whirlpool.

Healthy & Healing Cuisine

The resort features four world-class restaurants and a sushi bar. "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well." Manchebo is inspired by the immortal words of Virginia Woolf, and its wellness experience is deliciously enhanced with menus tailored to clean eating, with vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free options as well. A healthy smoothie menu was recently created, with vitamin-powered fresh-fruit smoothies featuring citrus, ginger, honey, and coconut water, with optional chia and flax seeds for an added protein boost. [T](#)

For more information on Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa's wellness offerings, visit the website at www.manchebo.com.

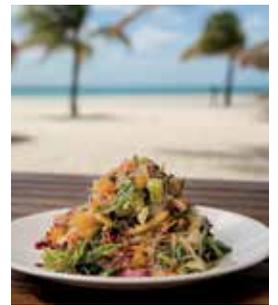


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Resort guests can enjoy daily complimentary Yoga & Pilates classes to keep the mind calm and your body moving, while overlooking the turquoise blue sea, Spa del Sol is a peaceful Caribbean-Balinese spa oasis. Clean eating is an essential component of the Manchebo resort experience with many fresh fruit and vegetable smoothies and chia pudding for breakfast to vegetarian and gluten free options for dinner.



For room reservations call 1-888-673-8036 or +297 582 3444 | J.E Irausquin Boulevard 55 | Eagle Beach | Aruba

www.manchebo.com

Beer Yoga

YES, IT'S A THING!



Photography by Steve Keith

The Shoco Beer Co., brewing craft beer exclusively for Aruba, presented the first Beer Yoga session this past summer. The sold-out event introduced locals to the pleasures of unwinding at the end of the day with relaxing yoga poses and an ice-cold beer.

Starting this November, Vela Sports Aruba, located beachside at the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, will host the Shoco Beer Sunset Yoga sessions every Friday at 6 pm on the beach between Marriott and The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba. Visitors to our island can enjoy this unique beach-culture experience alongside locals, soaking in Aruba's breathtaking sunsets and the relaxed vibe on the beautiful, powder-soft sands of Palm Beach.

Some may think the purity of yoga combined with beer to be counterintuitive, but yogis around the world are touting the calming and relaxing effects that a beer or two can have by allowing the mind to let go and embrace the sought-after consciousness yoga can bring. Or, a simpler explanation is maybe it's just the perfect remedy to



shake off some stress—and what better setting than Aruba? “The Shoco Beer Co. brews beers that embody the island lifestyle, and contributing to our beach culture on Aruba is very important to us,” says Tina Causey-Bislick, local marketing and PR director for the company. Vela Sports—offering windsurfing, kiteboarding, SUP, kayaking, and several beach and on-the-water yoga and fitness classes—is a trendsetter for Aruba’s beach culture, with manager Maartje Dolphin creating a chill vibe that transitions from the water to Vela’s bohemian beach hut and hang-out space, where locals and visitors to the island connect. “We like the relaxed, bohemian sense of place that Vela has created, and its beach-culture philosophy parallels Shoco Beer’s island-lifestyle motto,” Tina adds.

Vela’s Shoco Beer Sunset Yoga sessions start November 3, and will be held every Friday at 6 pm. The cost is \$25 and includes two craft beers (bring a towel). For more information or to reserve a spot, call +297-586-3735 or visit Vela’s website at www.velaaruba.com.

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 The advertisement has a blue and black color scheme. It features images of a sailboat, a person mountain biking, and a person windsurfing. A yellow banner with the 'AHMIST' logo is also visible. The text is arranged in a dynamic, overlapping layout.

At The Spa at

The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba

MASSAGING FOR BODY & MIND

*m*y favorite aspect of “wellness” is getting a massage. Yes, we have a legitimate excuse to indulge in a luxurious massage! According to the Mayo Clinic’s website (www.mayoclinic.org), “Studies of the benefits of massage demonstrate that it is an effective treatment for reducing stress, pain, and muscle tension.” The site goes on to explain that some studies have found that massage can be helpful for conditions like anxiety, digestive disorders, insomnia related to stress, sports injuries, and several other conditions.

Recently, I booked a massage at The Spa at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba. Their menu of treatments includes the signature 80-minute Divi Divi Massage. This massage was curated by The Spa’s team of therapists, who combined several techniques that are alternated throughout the 80 minutes, resulting in an ultra-dynamic massage experience.

The massage is named after Aruba’s famous divi-divi tree and the locally sourced, nurturing oil derived from it. While the massage works its wonders on your muscles, the oil leaves your skin glowing.

Besides the world-class treatments, The Spa’s ambiance and the pampering you receive upon arrival and throughout your spa experience are the X factors for me. The levels of luxury and service



here are second to none, so be sure to arrive early so you can enjoy the tranquil lounge before your treatment, and keep that special “hum” that follows a great spa treatment by relaxing in the post-treatment lounge, where infused water, fresh juice, and healthy snacks are offered.

To view The Spa’s menu and to book your special time of luxurious indulgence, visit the website at <http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/caribbean/aruba/spa>, or call (297) 527-2525 for more information. 

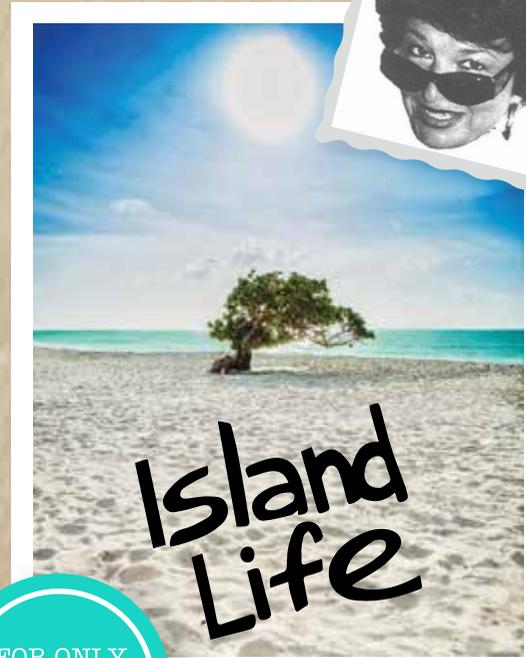


Island Life

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UNOCA

| SPECIAL FEATURE |

Mixology



Photography by Steve Keith



Magic

at the 3rd Annual Bartenders' Brawl

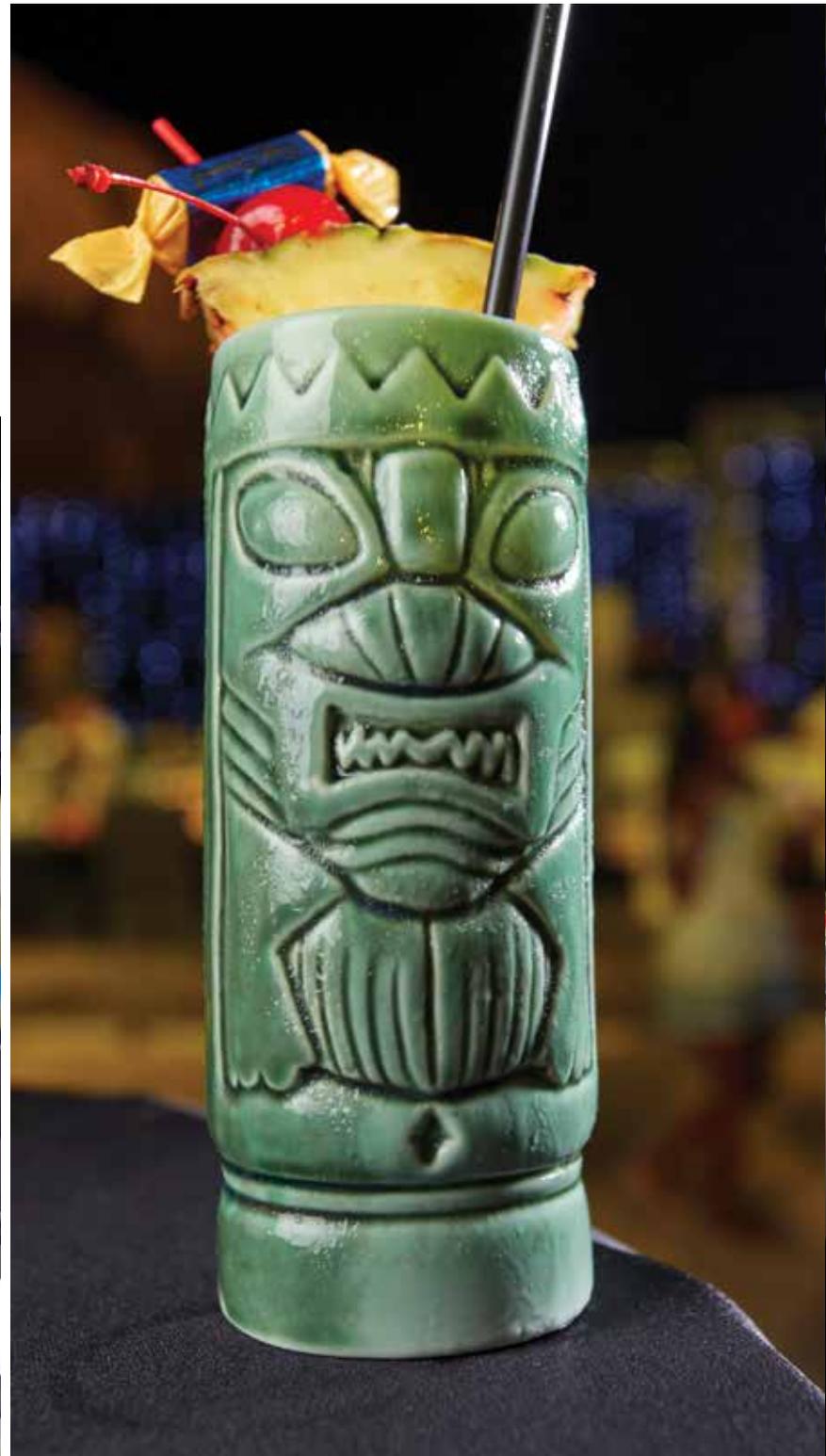
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he 3rd Annual Bartenders' Brawl was held on October 14 in conjunction with Eat Local Restaurant Month. The event, originally created by *Island Temptations*, was hosted and produced by the Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino and held beachfront at the Renaissance Ocean Suites. The beach-chic event showcased seven of Aruba's top bartenders impressing the crowd with their original craft-cocktail creations.

Aruba's local spirit distributors were the essential collaborators working to make this event happen, supplying all the liquor and necessary ingredients to produce these exciting libations for attendees of the event to enjoy. Renaissance's culinary team fueled the guests with savory noshes like juicy beef sliders, mini hot dogs, tempura veggies, and mini Caesar salads, while local deejay extraordinaire Deejay Rustica provided a chill auidal backdrop to the festivities.

This year, in addition to the People's Choice cocktail, a panel of judges selected the Judge's Choice. Receiving the most votes from guests at the event and earning the People's Choice title was the modern punch-style "Tropical Shades of Grey" creation from bartender Nelson Molina from Renaissance's Blue Bar, representing Tropical Bottling. The judges came to a unanimous decision on their favorite, the "Mad Magdalena," from bartender Yanis Garcia from Azia Restaurant & Lounge, representing Pepia Est. The judges praised the umami factor of this savory-with-a-hint-of-sweet-and-spice cocktail, wonderfully balancing the opposing tastes.

People's Choice Champion Nelson Molina created his "Tropical Shades of Grey" cocktail with Grey Goose Orange, Baron Otard VSOP Cognac, butterscotch liqueur, pineapple juice, and fresh passion fruit.



Nelson Molina from Renaissance's Blue Bar, representing Tropical Bottling

Juan Camilo Gomez, from the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, representing Manrique Capriles.



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Marriott's Giovanni Tromp partnered with the Aruba Trading Company.

*José Mestanza from
The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba,
representing Divino NV*



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| SPECIAL FEATURE |

Although there were ultimately just two winners, everyone in the crowd seemed to have their favorites. Juan Camilo Gomez, from the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, presented a chic sparkling cocktail perfect for brunch and made with Lolea's sparkling rosé, a touch of gin, and fresh watermelon on behalf of distributor Manrique Capriles; Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa's Carmen Hurtado collaborated with Arion Wine Company to create an elegant, martini-style cocktail made with TRU Organic Garden Vodka and Fruitlab Organic Ginger Liqueur; José Mestanza, manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba's BLT Steak, churned out a cocktail with a creamy texture created by a goat-cheese froth that complemented watermelon- and bubblegum-infused Tito's Handmade Vodka, distributed by Divino NV; Marriott's Giovanni Tromp partnered with the Aruba Trading Company for a

Judge's Choice Champion Yanis Garcia crafted the "Mad Magdalena" with Tequila Corazón, Cointreau, cucumber, jalapeño syrup, and lime and grapefruit juices in a sugar-, Himalayan pink salt-, and chipotle-rimmed glass.



Yanis Garcia from Azia Restaurant & Lounge, representing Pepia Est.



Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa's Carmen Hurtado collaborated with Arion Wine Company.



PUTTING REALITY ON PAUSE.

Comfortably situated just beyond the real world and all of life's responsibilities lies Okeanos Spa at Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino. Our signature treatments, Aruban aloe and transformative salon combine to give you a place that's worthy of being called paradise. Speaking of heaven on earth, Spa Cove on Renaissance Island awaits you with massages along the shore, where the waves are just as gentle as our touch.

Okeanos Spa is located at Renaissance Mall, Oranjestad City Center.

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*Joban Luque from Azia
Restaurant & Lounge,
representing La Cava.*



Loretti Design Studio

The Loretti Design Studio in Aruba is a place to create and to develop. Each product is made by hand and developed into a unique design. Curator of the studio and artist Deborah de Weerd, with a background in textile design, is inspired by her passion for color and eye for detail.



Using an eclectic variety of materials, she continuously explores to create unique designs, presenting her work under the name Loretti Design. The landscapes, textures, and light impressions found in Aruba influence her sculptural work. You can visit the Loretti Design Studio, located at Paradera Park 203.

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lusciously decadent dessert-style cocktail featuring Hennessy Cognac balanced with a hint of pistachio and topped with coconut toasted à la minute and cream; and La Cava tapped Johan Luque from Azia Restaurant & Lounge to create a cocktail with the sultry and smooth Ron Diplomático Rum. La Cava generously brought award-winning celebrity bartender Cesar Diaz from Venezuela to the island to perform his mixology magic for the crowd.

The team at Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino and *Island Temptations* were proud to provide a venue for Aruba's talented bartenders to showcase their creativeness and further elevate the island's growing craft-cocktail scene. Cheers to all the bartenders and distributors that helped make this a dynamic evening! 🍸



Judge's Choice Champion, Yanis Garcia and Renaissance's food and beverage director Diego Lamasson.

People's Choice Champion, Nelson Molina and Renaissance's food and beverage director Diego Lamasson.

Poetry is an Island

Text by Rona Coster
Photography by Anuar Habibe

P

oetry Night on Aruba was born ten years ago at Cuba's Cookin's old location on Wilhelminastraat in Oranjestad. Owner Douglass Marcus supported PR diva Maria Silva as she put together a bohemian entertainment program for his restaurant, including an open-mic evening where the chic and hip attempted to add poetry to their résumé.

While the early editions of Poetry Night were all about style, the later editions were all about substance. The audience grew in strength and in numbers. Out of the blue, the usually conforming and predictable regulars evolved to share a mix of rebellious and vulnerable thoughts with the audience.

"The intention of Poetry Night," explains Maria, "has always been to promote creative self-expression through the art of the spoken word." The audience in turn enjoys quality entertainment, with poets thinking differently, seeing differently, hearing differently, and ultimately acting differently, reinforcing the individuality of each member of our community.

At a certain point, Poetry Night set itself free from a permanent address and became a monthly pop-up gathering in unusual and unique places: a backyard, a dilapidated building, an abandoned theater. As expected, adults were then joined by kids and teens, and followers started to recognize certain Caribbean genres and certain talented performers. Papiamentu as a language received a huge boost, as it was used as a literary tool, not just as street jargon.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Poetry Night on the island, and to celebrate this milestone, BASHA Foundation and Maria Silva's PR firm, Vibration PR, joined forces to present Aruba's



first poetry festival, Poetry is an Island, on August 27, 2017.

Such a special occasion deserved a special location. Fitting the bill perfectly was Flor de Oriente, a recently remodeled rum shop, tucked away behind the court building in downtown Oranjestad.

The festival was hosted by poets Yakari Gabriel and Beach Lama. The lineup of poets included four street poets, six stage poets, and two international guest poets, Alysia Harris and Denice Frohman. But while poetry was the main attraction, the event was also a whirlwind of various other forms of entertainment. Ateliers '89 and Stichting Rancho both set up art exhibitions inside Flor de Oriente and on the street, while Korteweg erected a pop-up street art fair. A handful of musicians performed, including local young talents Santo Blanco, Pearl Dumfries, Rocky Croes, and Central Pieces.

A brass band, steelpans, and a vinyl-record corner rounded out the musical entertainment. Limbo dancers also regaled the crowd, and for some interactive fun, audience members were encouraged to play games of Bolas Criollas on the sidewalk or even attempt to compose their own poetry on some vintage typewriters.

The festival was a definite success, and audience members have already marked their calendars for the second edition of the poetry festival a year from now.



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